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Message Text

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56
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03

CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-04 CEA-01 EURE-00

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P 281852Z JUL 76
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3412

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 21977

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, FR
SUBJECT: FRANCOIS-PONCET REPLACES PIERRE-BROSSOLETTE
AS SECRETARY-GENERAL AT ELYSEE

1. JEAN FRANCOIS-PONCET, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS SINCE JANUARY OF THIS YEAR, WAS NAMED ON JULY 28 TO SUCCEED CLAUDE PIERRE-BROSSOLETTE AS SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE PRESIDENCY. THE LATTER, IT WAS ANNOUNCED SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, WILL BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONALIZED BANK, CREDIT LYONNAIS.

2. BOTH MEN ARE WELL-KNOWN TO WASHINGTON AS EXTREMELY ABLE ADMINISTRATORS WITH SOME 20 YEARS EXPERIENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT. FRANCOIS-PONCET WILL BRING TO THE ELYSEE SOMEWHAT MORE EXPERIENCE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PARTICULARLY IN AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO FRANCE: NORTH/SOUTH RELATIONS, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA. PIERRE-BROSSOLETTE WILL BRING HIS ECONOMIC AND MONETARY EXPERTISE TO THE DIRECTION OF ONE OF THE LARGEST BANKS IN FRANCE, WHICH HAS HAD A VACANCY AT THE TOP SINCE ITS FORMER PRESIDENT, JACQUES CHAINE, WAS
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ASSASSINATED IN A PARIS STREET - LAST MAY BY AN

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ANARCHIST.

3. DESPITE THE ELYSEE'S DISCLAIMER THAT THE CHANGE HAS NO POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE, COMMENTATORS WILL NO DOUBT READ INTO IT BOTH PERSONAL AND POLITICAL MEANING. LE MONDE, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS ALREADY LABELLED PB'S DEPARTURE AS A DISGRACE, DESCRIBING HIS RELATIONS WITH GISCARD AS STRAINED AND HIS TENURE AS MARKED BY PROFESSIONAL DIFFERENCES OVER GOVERNMENT POLICIES. WE BELIEVE THAT THIS REASONING IS OVERDRAWN AND THAT THE CHANGE IS RATHER DUE TO A CONJUNCTURE OF SEVERAL OTHER FACTORS:

-- THAT TWO HARD YEARS AT THE ELYSEE, IN A REGIME MORE AND MORE PRESIDENTIAL, HAVE TAKEN THEIR TOLL ON THE HEAD OF ITS STAFF AND ON HIS RELATION WITH GISCARD AND THE MATIGNON STAFF.

-- THAT PB TOOK ADVANTAGE OF A TEMPTING JOB OFFER WHICH WILL ASSURE HIM A VERY COMFORTABLE SALARY FOR YEARS TO COME.

-- THAT FP, A PERSONAL FRIEND OF GISCARD WHO HAS HIS PERSONAL CONFIDENCE, HAS PROVED HIMSELF AN EXTREMELY EFFECTIVE ADMINISTRATOR AT THE QUAI AND CLEARLY QUALIFIED FOR AN EVEN HIGHER POSITION. IN ADDITION, HE BRINGS WITH HIM FIVE YEARS EXPERIENCE IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO ADD TO HIS GOVERNMENT BACKGROUND.

-- PB'S MOVE TO AN IMPORTANT BANK LEAVES HIM IN A READY POSITION TO BE CALLED UPON BY HIS FORMER PATRON FOR ANY NUMBER OF UNOFFICIAL DUTIES AND EVEN TO ASSUME A MINISTRY OR AMBASSADORSHIP, AS HAS ALSO BEEN RUMORED IN THE PAST.

-- THAT THE TIMING OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT, COMING AS IT DOES ON THE HEELS OF WEEKS OF SPECU-

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LATION ABOUT MINISTERIAL AND OTHER HIGH-LEVEL CHANGES, WAS PROBABLY COINCIDENTAL, EVEN LOGICAL IN THAT MID-SUMMER IS TRADITIONAL FOR SUCH CHANGES.

GAMMON

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